

Message

From: Woolford, James [Woolford.James@epa.gov]
Sent: 7/12/2019 9:50:29 PM
To: OLEM OSRTI IO [OLEM_OSRTI_IO@epa.gov]; Manges, Ellen [Manges.Ellen@epa.gov]
CC: Smidinger, Betsy [Smidinger.Betsy@epa.gov]; Stavnes, Sandra [Stavnes.Sandra@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: FYI Anaconda Residents Detail Superfund Cleanup Concerns For EPA Watchdogs

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From: Johnson, Barnes
Sent: Friday, July 12, 2019 3:39 PM
To: Woolford, James <Woolford.James@epa.gov>; Stalcup, Dana <Stalcup.Dana@epa.gov>
Subject: FW: FYI Anaconda Residents Detail Superfund Cleanup Concerns For EPA Watchdogs

FYSA – similar to our experience at Amphenol.

Barnes Johnson

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From: Cisneros, Jose

Sent: Friday, July 12, 2019 3:34 PM

To: Sasseville, Sonya <Sasseville.Sonya@epa.gov>; Johnson, Barnes <Johnson.Barnes@epa.gov>; Mooney, Charlotte <Mooney.Charlotte@epa.gov>

Cc: Hyde, Tinka <hyde.tinka@epa.gov>; Nam, Ed <nam.ed@epa.gov>

Subject: FW: FYI Anaconda Residents Detail Superfund Cleanup Concerns For EPA Watchdogs

Here is an article about the latest community meeting held by the EPA OIG, as part of their audit of OLEM cleanup site risk communication effectiveness.

Joe

312-886-6945

From: Arcaute, Francisco

Sent: Friday, July 12, 2019 2:17 PM

To: Kelley, Jeff <kelly.jeff@epa.gov>; Rowan, Anne <rowan.anne@epa.gov>; Bassler, Rachel <Bassler.Rachel@epa.gov>

Cc: Safakas, Kirstin <Safakas.Kirstin@epa.gov>; Gonzalez, Rafael <Gonzalez.RafaelP@epa.gov>; Bury, Carolyn <bury.carolyn@epa.gov>; Cisneros, Jose <Cisneros.Jose@epa.gov>; Cannon, Phillippa <Cannon.Phillippa@epa.gov>

Subject: FYI Anaconda Residents Detail Superfund Cleanup Concerns For EPA Watchdogs

<https://www.mtpr.org/post/anaconda-residents-detail-superfund-cleanup-concerns-epa-watchdogs>

Anaconda Residents Detail Superfund Cleanup Concerns For EPA Watchdogs

By NORA SAKS • 7 MINUTES AGO

Wednesday night, Anacondans got a rare chance to speak directly about their experience with Superfund to the national office that investigates the Environmental Protection Agency. And most of what they had to say wasn't complimentary.

Anaconda residents have attended countless Superfund meetings over the last 36 years. But unlike the others, this one wasn't hosted by EPA.

"It is really important to understand that we are not part of the cleanup team. We're not part of the group of people who communicate about risks at the site. We are here to evaluate those people, and to find out how you think they are doing."

That's Jill Trynosky, with the independent Office of the Inspector General, speaking to a crowd of about 35 at a "listening session" in Anaconda last night.

Right now, the OIG is conducting a nationwide review of how well EPA communicates with the public about health risks at contaminated sites. They're evaluating eight across the country, including three Superfund sites, and the Anaconda Smelter Site is one.

That's because it's really big — 300 square miles were impacted by almost a century of copper smelting — it's been on the National Priorities List since 1983, and cleanup is ongoing there.

"Our questions are: do you feel like you received the information in the times that you needed to have it? Did you understand what you were being told by the EPA? And do you feel you knew what actions you needed to take to protect yourself from any contamination and that you were able to do that?" Trynosky says.

Ten residents seized the opportunity to respond to those prompts, and unleashed a firehose of thoughts and feelings about the cleanup. A recurring theme was the quality of the remediation of residential and public properties in Anaconda.

Stacy Caissey recently had her yard cleaned up because it was contaminated with arsenic, but she wasn't too pleased with the results. At the mic, she held up a plastic baggie, and started pulling out what she called "treasures."

"So in my clean dirt, there's a nail. There's another piece of metal from the fresh dirt. I've pulled pottery out of this dirt," Caissey says.

Caissey said EPA has been negligent about monitoring the cleanup and protecting workers, and she doesn't know what health risks might exist, because no one has told her anything.

"I'm worried for this community. I feel like we're literally living in an 'Erin Brockovich' movie right now, and if you haven't seen it you should probably go watch it. And it's not OK, what's going on here. And this is not OK, for my kids and/or my dogs. So thanks," she says.



Morgan Collier (L) and Jill Trynosky with the EPA Office of the Inspector General listen intently to Anaconda residents at a listening session at Fred Moodry Intermediate School. July 10, 2019.
Credit Nora Saks

Local Tim Coward echoed her doubts about the remediation efforts that are ordered by EPA and carried out by Atlantic Richfield, the company on the hook for the cleanup. He called for more accountability and better oversight.

"There's nobody there for the people of Anaconda to go to and say 'Hey, we got this situation,'" he says. "ARCO has got all these contractors in the back of their pockets, and they're going to stick up for them. But who's liable, who do we go to to help us out?"

Several residents expressed frustration at the intermittent communication and lack of follow up from EPA. They said to fill that void and increase trust, they need more consistent, casual contact with agency staff, and a local advocate.

Another, more complicated issue that surfaced is the rate of certain chronic and rare diseases in Anaconda, and any connection they might have to exposure to heavy metals. This is 81-year-old Rose Nyman.

"So the deaths are there. And I continue to say we don't have the body count like Libby does, but it is very concerning. I have a son who was treated for cancer, and in remission, but who knows what tomorrow holds," she says.

Nyman said the number of cancer cases in Anaconda seems abnormally high, and critiqued the way cancer and MS are currently studied and tracked.

"I think those health risks were not relayed to us in an honest manner by the state of Montana and EPA. I don't feel EPA is an effective communicator. And many things are brushed aside," she says.

Some ARCO and EPA staff were present at the meeting, listening, but not responding to what was mostly a cocktail of criticism from the public, garnished with a few compliments.

The team from the EPA's Office of the Inspector General is talking separately to agency staff, technical experts, and local leaders in Anaconda. Jill Trynosky, with OIG, says they'll incorporate all the feedback they get into a comprehensive report on EPA's risk communication, and make recommendations on how the agency can improve.

Once EPA agrees to those recommendations, the agency has to follow through with the corrective actions.

"So as far as the recommendations being optional or not optional, they are not optional," Trynosky says.

But if there is disagreement between the OIG and EPA about the recommendations, a nuanced resolution process ensues, and the ultimate outcome is not at the OIG's discretion.

OIG expects to complete the report by the end of the year. It will also be sent to Congress, so congressional leaders can question EPA on the findings and implementation.

The office is still accepting written comments about communication at the Anaconda Superfund site. Comments can be emailed to OIG.RiskCommunicationTeam@epa.gov.

They can also be mailed to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Inspector General, Attn: OIG Risk Communication Team, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Room 2416, Mail Code: 2460T, Washington, D.C. 20460-0001.

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